

The  
Southborough Historical Society  
presents

# A Walk Through the Past



A  
*Walking Tour of  
Southborough's Historic  
"Holy Hill"*



## WELCOME

"We named it later Holy Hill since on it soon rose up the Episcopal and Congregational churches and on its gentle slope many of our earliest souls wait Judgment"

*\*From an address by Rev. Robert Howes, a son of Southborough at the dedication of the Southborough Historical Museum June 11, 2000.*

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The Southborough Historical Society welcomes you to an historic walking tour of Southborough's "Holy Hill" .

Many hours of hard work have gone into this project and the Society would like to thank the following people for their contributions to researching, writing and preparing the following publication.

David Falconi, Society President  
Carole Maconi, Board of Directors  
Eleanor Hamel, Society Historian  
Susan Allen, Museum Curator  
Russell Horne, Board of Directors  
Marjorie Coldwell, Pilgrim Church Historian  
Richard "Nick" Noble, Fences of Stone Author  
Anne Freeman , Southborough Artist  
Rev. Robert Howes, Southborough Author & Poet

Southborough is very lucky to be rich in history, not only here on Holy Hill but throughout the town. We hope you enjoy the following walking tour and hope it might inspire you to seek out other historical areas in town and find out more about the people that have come here before us and made Southborough what it is today.

*Please be careful as you walk this tour as you will be in a public & busy parking lot and also crossing public streets.*

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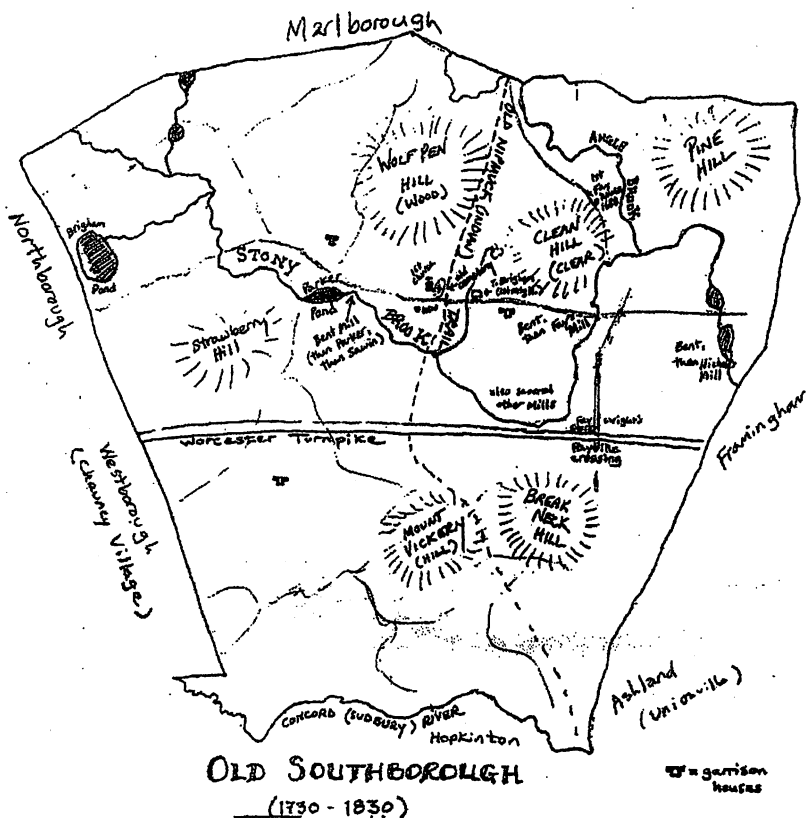
## THIS PLACE WE CALL SOUTHBOROUGH

In the beginning God placed us in middle Massachusetts which was a wild southern section of Marlborough. It was crisscrossed by Nipmuc tribe trails and a sweet stream they called Stony Brook which gave the area its name. A man named Peter Bent started it all with a mill along that run of water and soon others followed. Visualize this spot where the first settlers found trees suitable for building homes, water for themselves and their animals and land for the taking. Following the first homes came the need for a Meeting House and Burial Ground and in 1727 Stony Brook became Southborough, a town set apart. More settlers arrived and a pound was built for stray animals and a Training Field for the Militia who would march off to Concord on that fateful day in April 1775 to help forge the great nation we enjoy today.

Children grew and so did a public school. The Congregationalists sought a Church and eventually the Unitarians provided a building. The developing town now needed a Town House and Main Street was the center of activity. The Common shrank and instead of grazing space became the place where residents honored those who fought in defense of their country. A small private boy's school had begun operation in two houses and the Episcopal congregation settled opposite the school. An Inn and commercial buildings gave way to a greatly expanded private school. The Library finally found a home of its own after serving the community in the Town House. Three hundred years have surely changed what was a wild and lonely landscape to what you see now.

Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote once "If I want to understand what is happening today or try to decide what will happen tomorrow, I look back. A page of history is worth a volume of logic."

We should rejoice that so much tangible old Southborough remains, like Main Street, the structures that housed Lincoln's Store, South Union School, Mooney field, Fayville Village Hall, the Village Society, Pilgrim Church, the Town House, the Common, none of these of course can be miniaturized, tagged and placed on the shelves of our museum. All of them are part and parcel, proud jewels in the necklace of our common inheritance. We salute the commonwealth of our yesterday in this place we call Southborough.\*





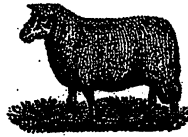
## LYSCOM APPLE TREE

This tree is one of the few remaining from the Historical Society project in 1977 to celebrate the town's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Lyscom apple had been rescued from extinction through a project of the Worcester County Horticultural Society. Scions of many old varieties were grafted onto rootstock in an experimental orchard in North Grafton belonging to S. Lothrop Davenport. The last recorded Lyscom Apple Tree in Southborough was about 1917 with Miss Mary Finn recalling a lone tree on Flagg Road. The trees disappeared through lack of care and disease and a W.P.A. program to eradicate old trees thought to harbor disease.

The Society was referred to James Mistark of Grafton, senior member of the Orchard Committee and he agreed to graft 10 scions in 1974, our order being increased to 30 later, so that residents could obtain trees in addition to those for the town.

The originator of the Lyscom apple variety, according to Deacon Peter Fay papers, which covered the time from his early childhood up to 1888, was Samuel Lyscom. Lyscom was a resident at the time of the town's incorporation in 1727 and he, in fact, signed the petition to set the town off from Marlborough. During Lyscom's lifetime he held every office in town and eventually became a Judge. He was Southborough's second Representative under the Colonial government.

Lyscom married twice, Mary his first wife died in 1733 and Hannah died six months after Samuel's own death on May 18, 1755. He had ten children, his oldest surviving son John was born in 1727, the year of the town's incorporation. John inherited his property together with his stepmother, Hannah. On April 4, 1772 a deed recorded the sale of 21 acres with house to Josiah Fay and Lyscom left town.



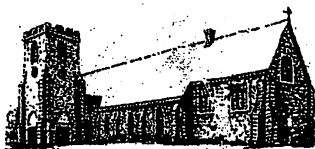
## TOWN POUND

Every early town had a pound. These were necessary because many animals grazed freely on the Common land and strays frequently trespassed. Eventually farmers were able to build stone fences to keep the cattle in but animals would always escape so each town had a pound where these strays were kept until reclaimed.

In order to reclaim his animal, the owner had to pay a fine and if the animal was not claimed it was sold and half the proceeds went to the town and half to the person who impounded it.

According to "Fences of Stone" the Southborough pound was recorded in different locations. In 1735 "the Selectmen voted many improvements. The school was completed, located alongside the Pound and Noon House, west of Timothy Brigham's land." This would indicate the Pound was there before 1735, one of the town's early landmarks. This was north of Main Street and below the Burial Ground. The map indicates that this location was changed slightly in 1773 moving slightly north and in 1797, it moved to its present location, west of the Meeting House.

It fell into disrepair and was rebuilt as a project of the Southborough Rotary Club and dedicated as a memorial garden for Veterans' and Citizens' on September 30, 1967 by Lt. Gov. Francis W. Sargent.



## ST. MARK'S CHURCH & BURNETT CEMETERY

Joseph Burnett was the primary mover for the Episcopal Church in Southborough. In March of 1853 a declaration of trust established the first Episcopal Church in Southborough and services were to be in private homes until a chapel could be built.

Services were held regularly in different locations but mostly the Town Hall, Burnett's Home and Pilgrim Church. When the Stone Shop on the Burnett estate became available in 1860, the upper floor was fitted up as a small chapel becoming the town's first Episcopal Church. It was then announced that Alexander Esty had been asked to draw up plans for a permanent building. The cornerstone was laid on August 15, 1862 and on June 16, 1863 the stone church was consecrated.

By 1867 a choir was established. This was an all-male activity since women were not permitted up in the sanctuary. This practice was discontinued in 1893 when it was voted women could be full members of the Church.

The congregation grew and in 1889 the Church was extended, the first of four expansions between 1880 and 1910 including the bell tower in 1890. In 1906 the sanctuary was renovated and expanded in memory of Joseph and Josephine Burnett. The easternmost few feet encroached on town land and Burnett made a contribution to the town to settle the dispute.

In the rear of St. Mark's Church is the Burnett family cemetery. This is a private cemetery where lies Joseph Burnett and many of his family members and descendants. Many of those resting here have served or nation, state and town in various capacities during their lifetimes.



## SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN HOUSE

The first Town House was built in 1840 on land deeded to the Town by the First Parish to separate Church and State. It was built at a cost of \$2,900 and was 40 feet by 56 feet. Built of wood in the Greek Doric style, there were 4 columns on the façade and it was painted white. The demise of this building by fire was in 1869 and was the subject of considerable controversy. The Worcester newspaper reporting on the fire which burned it to the ground made a number of insinuations. It referred to the residents of Main St. wanting a new "town house to enhance the value of their property and look a little grander to the passer by, But the town house extant—how could that be got rid of?" The article goes on to say that the proposal for a new Town House was turned down by the voters. It further reports that "the republican leaders have always a batch of lickspittles and they did not lack them then. One or more of them shouted in open town meeting "burn the dam thing." No evidence of "incendiarium" was found.

The replacement, the second Town House was erected on the site of the first Town House at a cost of \$30,000 and completed in one year for it's dedication in April 1870. The plans called for a two story building to have a hall over town offices.

This building has been in the mainstream of town life observing activities commemorating the 150th, 200th and 275th anniversary of Southborough. Due to renovations it was not included in the 250th Anniversary sites. Town meetings were regularly held in the hall upstairs until 1969 when it was determined the population had out grown the facility. For many years social activities were permitted in the hall until the threat to public records became too great with the risk of fire. It currently houses town offices and is the meeting place of town boards and officials. In the late 20th century an elevator was added in the rear of the building to permit handicap access to the second floor.



## FAY SCHOOL

The Burnett family influence once again came to the fore with the establishment of this school and changed the face of Main Street. Eliza Belle Burnett Fay and Harriet Marcella Burnett, children of Joel Burnett and cousins of Joseph Burnett, wanted to start a day-school for young boys and girls in the center of town. They rented a room on the main floor of Deacon Gabriel Parker's house on the north side of Main Street, west of where you stand now. Joseph Burnett and Sylvester Fay gave financial support to this informal day-school and suggested that they take in young boarders. For this purpose they used the William Greenwood home on the south side of Main Street. In the fall of 1866 "Mrs. Fay and Miss Burnett's Boarding School", opened with two boarders from Worcester and five local boys.

In 1885, Joseph Burnett increased his financial assistance. The other financial mainstay was Mrs. Fay's mother, Dolly Bellows Little. She took out loans to finance the construction of a new dormitory, classrooms and schoolroom wing as additions to the Greenwood house. By 1886 all debts were paid thankfully since she passed away July, 1887.

The main building was renovated after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a Victorian roof added to provide an extra floor of dormitories. Waldo Fay purchased the apple orchard along Middle Road and had the trees cut down to create an athletic field. In 1908 Fay added a new school room wing, a library extension and converted a schoolroom into a Common Room.

In 1922 Fay School ceased to be a family operation and became an incorporated body, complete with a Board of Trustees.

In 1972 part of the school, the Robinson House, caught fire due to an electrical fault and in 1978 the new dormitory was dedicated. In 1986 the Fay School old main building, the original Greenwood House, was demolished.



## MILE STONE

In 1763, while Deputy Postmaster General, Benjamin Franklin was given the job of placing markers at one-mile intervals along the Boston Post Road. This road was established as a permanent highway in 1639 running between Boston and New York. He invented a device that was attached to his carriage wheel and acted as an odometer. At each mile a wooden stick was driven into the ground and a following crew erected the markers that were engraved with the mileage from Boston and perhaps a nearby large community. The purpose of the markers was to calculate postal rates to be charged by local postmasters. There are 2 other mile markers remaining besides this one. One stands near the intersection of Sears Road and Main Street and the other at East Main Street and Overlook Drive.



## TOWN COMMON

In 1700 the Nipmuck plantation lands were deeded to Marlborough opening up new land for settlement. Pioneers found their way south by means of the trails created by the Nipmucks and settled near Stony Brook. The land included meadows and a burial ground and the area was called "Cow Commons".

Cow Commons was divided into four squadrons with meadows assigned to groups of settlers for grazing. The squadron division was also used in distributing able bodied men in defense units for this was the frontier. New settlers came and in 1724 Timothy Brigham moved to Stony Brook and built a spacious home on the southern edge of Nipmuck Meadow, east of the Indian Trail and alongside a brook which branched from the main brook to the south.

The community grew around the Common grazing land and in 1727 separated from Marlborough to become Southborough. Some of the common land was the burial ground established by the Nipmucks and some was necessary for the Meeting House. Some was required for the Training Field and some for the Pound. As time went by the "common" land shrank and when the monument for the Civil War was placed on the "common" the area was fenced around with a stonewall.



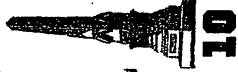
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1875

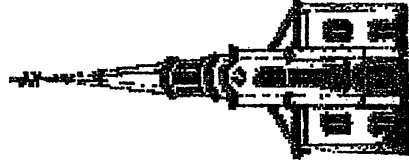
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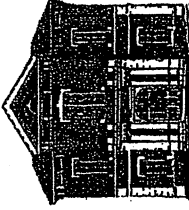
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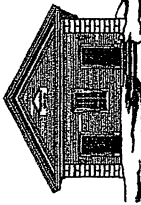
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16

ST. MARKS STREET



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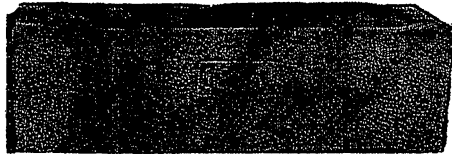
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COMMON STREET



MAIN STREET

7



## STONE WATER TROUGH

On the Main Street side of the Common is a stone water trough. These were usually carved out of a single, large stone or were assembled from stone "flags". They all had a source of water when created although that has dried up here and the original purpose of this trough is no longer being served. Troughs were provided for traveling livestock and were usually on or at locations frequented by animals. This trough carries the date 1875 carved into it – the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the struggle for American Independence.



## CANNON ON THE COMMON

One of Southborough's major memorials is the Cannon on the Common. It is a Krupp Howitzer 155mm "short barrel" cannon "used to fire projectiles at medium velocity, and with relatively high trajectories". It was captured from the Germans in World War I (1918) by American soldiers. In 1919 it was donated to the Town by Southborough's Bagley-Fay American Legion post. It was placed at the east end of the Common and dedicated "in memory of all World War I veterans." In 1969 when the 20th Century Wars Memorial was erected, the Cannon was moved to its present location at the opposite end of the Common.

Restoration work was done in 1991 by Roland Currier, R.E. Jarvis Co., Ted's of Fayville and the Southborough Highway Department.

In the fall of 2002 a major restoration project of the cannon was headed by Southborough Veteran Peter Phaneuf. Decaying wheel parts were replaced with white Oak, and a stand was constructed and mounted on a granite and concrete base to keep the wheels off the ground. The entire gun was sandblasted and painted. Contributing members of the project were Adam Phaneuf, Fred Mabardy of Southborough. Veterans John F. McEntegart of Framingham, William Clewes of Southborough. Department of Public Works staff members James Harding, Richard Rock and Mike Nelson.



## CIVIL WAR MONUMENT

Henry H. Peters proposed at the February 1865 Town Meeting, that a memorial be erected in honor of the Southborough dead in the Civil War. He began the subscription by contributing \$500.00 towards a monument. Nine others contributed to match Peter's gift. Cora Newton organized a Benefit Assembly Ball and a series of Ladies' Tea parties which brought the total to over \$1,600.00.

Unveiled on New Year's Day, 1867, the entire town turned out – almost 2,000 people. They crowded in and around Pilgrim Church which was decorated with evergreens and large signs with the names of the war dead. There was a dusting of snow but the Church doors were open so those outside could hear the address by the Honorable Samuel Appleton. The service completed, an honor guard of Southborough's surviving Civil War veterans marched out of the Church and led the people to the green. The green had been carefully laid out, a new stone fence had been put around it. Then the monument of polished Fitzwilliam granite, with the names of the dead Southborough soldiers cut into the four faces, was unveiled. Three cheers were given and the "Battle Hymn of The Republic" was sung ending the ceremony.

In 1877 Southborough's "Semi-Tercentennial" celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Town, saw the monument trimmed in white flowers while on July 27, 1904, the trim was in red, white and blue for "Old Home Day". An elaborate picnic spread for almost 1,000 people was served on the green and around the monument as soon as the speeches were done. Games and horse drawn tours of the town followed. The dominant figure at the celebration was Selectman Francis Dexter Newton, a Civil War Veteran and Master of Ceremonies.



## 20TH CENTURY WARS MEMORIAL

The 20th century War Memorial was erected in 1969 and dedicated on the 3rd Heritage Day, October 13th of that year. It was originally engraved with 250 names and made from New Hampshire Granite. It honors men from Southborough who fought in World War I, World War II and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

Master of Ceremonies for the dedication was Donald Banks Commander of the Town's American Legion Post. Other dignitaries present that day were Lucien Dion Commander of the Southborough Veterans of Foreign Wars post, Father Wayne Berton, Rev. Paul Flagg, State Senator James Kelly, State Representative Robert Reynolds, Congressman Harold Donahue, and Secretary of State John Davoren.

Every year on Memorial Day the 20th Century War Memorial is one of the sites visited during the official ceremonies honoring those who gave their lives in defense of our country. It is also visited during the Annual Veteran's Day observances held each year in November.



## SOUTHBOROUGH LIBRARY

Southborough residents have been privileged to have a "library" of sorts since about 1797 when the Rev. Jereboam Parker established the first ever "Social Library" in the Inn near the Meeting House. This was not a free lending library that did not come about until a Town Meeting in 1852 discussed funding a "public library". Following a speech by Dr. A. L. Hobart, Col. Francis B. Fay stood up and offered "500 pieces of silver" to form a nucleus of a Free Town Library. An additional \$500 was raised and it was voted to call the collection "The Fay Library". The books were placed in the back of the Town Hall with Herman Este the first Librarian.

It was a few months before the Boston Public Library was created and Fay Library became one of the first free public libraries.

By the 1860's the collection of books had doubled and in 1870, Col. Fay donated an additional \$1,000.00.

The Library was still in the Town Hall at this time and had over 4,000 volumes in the collection and was growing rapidly.

In 1904 the town held a "Triple Celebration" on July 27. It was an Old Home Day, a reunion of Peters High School graduates and the 177<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation of the town. One of the speakers, Eugene Fay urged the consideration of a separate building for the Library. It was not until 1908 however that the Board of Library Trustees voted to go ahead with a separate building. The Burnett family had donated the land at the junction of Main Street and Marlborough Road — the site of the original Pound and across from Timothy Brigham's old house and where the first St. Mark's School had stood.

Construction began in 1909 and it took until 1911 to complete. Volunteers moved the collection from the Town Hall at the top of the hill to the new location. During this period and until 1913 the library was open on a limited basis only.



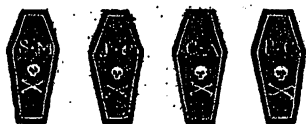
## PILGRIM CHURCH

The Town of Southborough was incorporated in 1727 and the site known as "holy hill" chosen for a meeting house. Three acres of land were set apart for the meeting house, a burial place and a training field. That first Meeting House/ Town Church was replaced by the current building, dedicated in 1806 and built under the supervision of Moses Newton. That meeting house had galleries around 3 sides of the sanctuary, box pews, a high pulpit with a winding staircase leading up to it and a low steeple with a bell. It continued to be used as a Meeting House up until 1834 when the state disestablished Parish Churches. The Unitarians took ownership of the building and the town had to build their own meeting house.

In 1831 thirteen Trinitarian members of the town church founded Pilgrim Congregational Church. In 1857 they bought the Parish Church from the Unitarians. Repairs and renovations included a twenty-foot addition to the back of the church, a higher steeple with a new bell, and the removal of the galleries around the sanctuary, the old pulpit, and the box pews.

The 1938 hurricane caused the steeple to tip out of plumb and needing repair. In 1953 the steeple was repaired so that the bell could be rung again. In 2001 major repair was needed for termites and dry rot. The years 1940, 1958, the 1970's and 2003 saw major sanctuary renovations.

The parish hall addition in 1963 added a church office, Pastor's study, two large classrooms, a hall with a stage, storage closets, a large kitchen and 2 new restrooms. 2003 saw repairs to the Steeple, installation of an elevator, handicapped bathrooms, a new organ, and a second story addition of 4 classrooms.



## OLD BURIAL GROUND

When the colonists came to Stony Brook they found that the Nipmuck tribe had been there before them. They had created a burial ground in "the place of sudden death" interring the dead from two plagues in this place. Eliot's Christian Nipmucks had continued to use it and since they could not build over it, the colonists continued this use. As such, it was practical to build their Meeting House next to it.

In the winter of 1727-8 those not involved in building the Meeting House laid a stone wall around the Burial Ground. They cut down the heavy brush along the northern and eastern edges, which had sheltered the Nipmuck graves. "Thus were the dead belonging to the region's first people bounded in with those buried from the English settlement."

In 1735 Timothy Brigham proposed and put through financing for a Powder House, for the town Militia, in the Burial Ground within the stone walls. This would contain gunpowder, ball and shot.

In 1740 a scarlet fever epidemic swept though the area and many died and were buried here. In 1750 Common Street was laid out from Main Street and new shelters for carriages and horses were built next to the cemetery south wall.

The Burial Ground was becoming crowded by 1840 and so the town voted to empty the powder house and take it down. In 1843 they closed the burial ground and planned a new Cemetery. With the closing men and women with kin already buried there would also be permitted to lie there otherwise no more were permitted.

The September 20, 1938 hurricane flattened 90 stones but because of the Depression money could not be spared to repair them and they have never been replaced.



## COLONIAL TRAINING FIELD

When Stony Brook was settled it was necessary for the residents to have a meeting house, burial ground, common grazing meadow, pound for strays and an area for the use of those protecting the settlement to train. Marlborough allotted the land for this as no one had claimed this area. Three acres were settled for the Meeting House and Burial Ground in December 1727. Treasurer Woods paid a small sum to the Marlborough Proprietors for a 20-acre tract behind the Meeting House location for use as a Training Field and the Minister's settlement. This open meadow was also used for grazing stock and was referred to as "Cow Commons".

In 1740 Captain William Ward and Lt. Timothy Brigham were in charge of military exercises on the Training Field. A sense of unrest stepped up the training. Powder, shot, bullets and flints were kept in the Powder House, which had been located near the Burial Ground wall where, hopefully, no damage could be done in case of an explosion. These munitions were re-supplied in 1741. Southborough men would continue to use the Training Field for mustering the "troops" for King George's War, the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War. It was here that Captain Josiah Fay gathered his troops on April 19th 1775 to head off to Concord. Arriving too late for the battles they did lend a hand in harassing the British troops on their retreat to Boston.

In more peaceful times the Field would serve as a gathering place for community activities and from 1823 on the Annual Farmers' Fair was held there each year, sponsored by the Southborough Grange; baseball games, with up to 20 men per side; turkey shoots and all the usual social activities that time would allow.

As with the Common, the free ground for town use gradually shrank with only the area around the town Museum remaining, of the green space that was the Training Field.



## SOUTHBOROUGH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The "Flagg School" was originally built in 1859 and located at the intersection of Flagg and Deerfoot Roads. The town spent \$1430.59 constructing the District 5 School house as it was known then and 4 other school houses were built at that time located in various places throughout the town. This building is the only one still standing of the 5 original school houses.

In 1894 the school house at Southborough Centre which was located just north of the old Burial Ground fell into disrepair and the District 5 school house was moved from it's original location to the site where it sits today. An extension of 10 feet was added to the rear of the building and it was again put into service as a school house.

In 1900 the new Peters High school (located where the central fire station stands today) was built and would see use as a combination high school and grammar school. The Flagg school was no longer need as a school and in 1906 it became the home of the Southborough Fire Dept. with 2 garage doors were installed on the front of the building. In 1928 a new fire station was constructed on Main St (current home of Southboro House of Pizza). The Flagg School was not done with it's service to the town as it soon became the home of the Southborough Tree Dept. In the second half 20th Century it housed the Southborough Water Dept. When the highway department and water department were combined into the Southborough Department of Public Works, the building again became empty.

In 1998 the Town leased the building to the Southborough Historical Society and it was completely renovated, mostly by the students of Assabet Valley Vocational High School. On June 11, 2000 the building was dedicated as the Southborough Historical Museum. This is the oldest town building in existence today and it has served the town faithfully for nearly 150 years.



**TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT  
SOUTHBOROUGH'S HISTORY, WE  
RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING:**

***\*Fences of Stone, A History of Southborough Massachusetts***  
by Richard "Nick" Noble

***\*Historical Sketches Concerning the Town of Southboro, Mass.***  
by Deacon Peter Fay

***\*When the School Bell Rang***  
by Charlotte Milani

***\*A History of Cordaville***  
by Barbara Donahue

***\*Southborough Soldiers in the War of the Revolution***

***\*The Worcester Tornado June 9, 1953***  
By William F. Chittick

***\*Deerfoot "The Aristocrat of Farms"***  
By Paul Doucette

***\*A History of Pilgrim Church in Southborough, MA***  
By M. Coldwell, Rev. D. Cross, M. Taylor

***The Fay School, A History 1866 -1986***  
By Scott C. Steward

***\*These publications are available for sale at the Southborough Historical Society Museum***

**The others can be viewed at the Southborough Library**

**Southborough Historical Society  
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508-229-8055**

**[www.southboroughhistory.org](http://www.southboroughhistory.org)**

You are cordially invited to become a member of the Southborough Historical Society, Inc., an institution dedicated to the care and preservation of Southborough's history and culture. The Society, founded in 1965, is a rich source of information about Southborough, its history and it's people. From the preservation of numerous historic items to sponsoring programs dealing with all kinds of historic subject matter, the Historical Society helps contribute to the cultural enrichment of our Town, State, and Nation.

The Historical Society is a membership corporation. All our activities and the continued operation of the Society depend on the support of its members. Our Nation creates history every day. Your generous support helps preserve that history for the citizens of tomorrow.

***Join the Southborough Historical Society  
Today!!!***

The Southborough Historical Society is a qualified non-profit, charitable and educational organization under IRS code Sec. 501 (c);(3) and Mass General Laws 180, 26A. Contributions are deductible on individual and business tax returns.